



Tuesday, June 24th, 14:30-15:00, room 101

Augusto Soares da Silva

Catholic University of Portugal – Braga

The cultural and moral grounding of the metaphors of austerity policies in the Portuguese press

Keywords: metaphor, cultural models, morality, Cognitive Linguistics, ideology

An ongoing debate concerning *conceptual metaphor* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999) involves its contextualized and cultural nature (see e.g. Sharifian et al. 2008, Semino 2008, Yu 2009). This presentation analyses the cultural grounding of metaphor in the Portuguese press discourse that implemented harsh austerity policies by the Portuguese government aiming to solve the serious economic present crisis in Portugal. The analysis relies on a corpus of news and opinion articles published in two time periods: (i) June-July 2011, after the entry of the Troika and together with the announcement of the first austerity measures by the new government, and (ii) May 2013, when protests against the austerity policies, the government and the Troika intensified. The present study adopts a cognitive and cultural view of language following the promising convergence between Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (Charteris-Black 2005; Dirven et al. 2007; Hart 2010, in press). The analysis firstly identifies and interprets the conceptual metaphors of austerity, and secondly highlights the cultural motivations and the ideological functions of the metaphors.

In order to identify the metaphors, we adopted the “metaphorical pattern analysis” as proposed by Stefanowitsch (2006). This method takes the target domains of the metaphors as the starting-point of the analysis. 8 key words from the target domains of economy, finance and politics were searched for in the corpus, namely *austeridade* ‘austerity’, *corte* ‘cut’, *dívida* ‘debt’, *Estado* ‘State’, *orçamento* ‘budget’, *pobreza* ‘poverty’, *poupança* ‘saving’ and *Troika* ‘Troika’. Considering these targets, we gathered 1,151 metaphorical expressions which can be related to three generic conceptual metaphors, namely metaphors based on THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING (Lakoff & Turner 1989), metaphors based on *image schemas* (Johnson 1987; Hampe 2005), and event metaphors. For example, metaphors of austerity are typically related to human behavior (responsibility/irresponsibility, discipline, sacrifice, obesity, cruelty, despotism, honor, good students), family budget and debts, PATH and FORCE image schemas, and war, games, household management, therapy, and mission. Interestingly, there is a strong increase of the negative sense of these metaphors in the press between 2011 and 2013.

The corpus analysis reveals the persuasive and manipulative force of specific metaphors used in the implementation and justification of harsh austerity policies, namely the metaphors of obesity/diet, indebted family, good student, and sacrifice. These metaphors aim to convince the Portuguese society to accept the drastic cuts addressing the social expenses of the State, wages reductions, fiscal sacrifices and poverty. Crucially, these metaphors are grounded in moral cultural



models (Lakoff 1996, 2004). Austerity is conceptualized as moral discipline, necessary punishment, and moral imperative not to “live above its means”. These moral metaphors serve the ideological agenda of austerity, foster the beliefs that budgets deficits are always a problem, economy is like household management, and austerity policies help the economies to revert to their long-term growth. In the actual context of widespread perception that austerity and sacrifices were not worthy, these metaphors are also used to reveal their mischievous and immoral features. Specifically, austerity is seen as immoral, as it is not a real economic policy, but rather a politics of crime and punishment, sin and atonement.

References

1. Charteris-Black, Jonathan (2005). *Politicians and Rhetoric. The persuasive power of metaphor*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
2. Dirven, René, Frank Polzenhagen & Hans-Georg Wolf (2007). Cognitive Linguistics, ideology, and Critical Discourse Analysis. In Dirk Geeraerts & Hubert Cuyckens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1222-1240.
3. Hampe, Beate (ed.) (2005). *From Perception to Meaning. Image schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
4. Hart, Christopher (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New perspectives on immigration discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
5. Hart, Christopher (in press). Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. In Ewa Dabrowska & Dagmar Divjak (eds.), *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
6. Johnson, Mark (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
7. Lakoff, George (1996). *Moral Politics. How liberals and conservatives think*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
8. Lakoff, George (2004). *Don't Think of Elephant: Know your values and frame the debate-the essential guide for progressives*. New York: Chelsea Green.
9. Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
10. Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York: Basic Books.
11. Lakoff, George & Mark Turner (1989). *More than Cool Reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
12. Semino, Elena (2008). *Metaphor in Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
13. Sharifian, Farzad, René Dirven, Ning Yu & Susanne Niemeier (eds.) (2008). *Culture, Body, and Language. Conceptualizations of internal body organs across cultures and languages*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
14. Stefanowitsch, Anatol (2006). Corpus-based approaches to metaphor and metonymy. In Anatol Stefanowitsch & Stephan Th. Gries (eds.), *Corpus-based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1-16.
15. Yu, Ning (2009). *The Chinese Heart in a Cognitive Perspective. Culture, body, and language*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.